

Mr. Chairman...members of the committee:

My name is Bill Harris (spell). I represent District 30, beginning on the Main Street of Lewistown, continuing east to Circle, MT. (Read Bill Title 285)

This bill begins to put to rest the unanswered questions, the unnecessary hostilities, and the hidden agendas that have confused the simple process of getting a license to bow hunt elk.

Resident hunters want assurance that they can bowhunt each year in the areas they have become familiar with, close to home. This has become a tradition in Eastern Montana where friends share this experience, and fathers take their sons and daughters hunting after school sharing an experience in nature, unequalled.

This bill requires each hunter to choose the area he or she will hunt, then guarantees that they can do just that. There are many benefits that come with this process.

First of all, this will best address the over crowding issue brought forward by the Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Commission.

For the towns and counties of eastern Montana this bill reestablishes financial stability that they have depended on for many years.

The restaurants, grocery stores, gas stations, hotels and motels, meat processors, sporting goods stores and all the store fronts on the main streets of each town will again receive the business of archery hunters that they so desperately need. In just a few weeks of archery season, these communities receive a very large part of their annual income. Resident outfitters and ranchers, both in block management and operating privately generate a large part of the local and state revenue. Many jobs depend on this industry.

Eastern Montana's economy is hurting badly as it is. Nonresident license management by the FW &P commission in the past 3 years has piled large hardship on the communities of eastern Montana for no justifiable reason.

This is strongly supported by non-profit organizations who have their own agenda. They drive wedges between Montana hunters, Montana landowners, and Montana Outfitters. Their philosophy is to divide and conquer. They are very well funded and organized. Let's work together as Montanans to solve our own problems.

I have added an amendment that answers those who have asked that the quality of trophy bull elk be addressed. No spike bull elk will be allowed to be harvested at all in archery season.

Archery hunting has only a small impact on elk populations. The percent of elk killed by archery hunters in Montana has increased from 2% success to 7% to 8% in the past 20 years. In managed elk herds excluding wolves, bull elk calf replacement rates vary from 30% to 40% survival rate. By not harvesting spikes, a large replacement rate of branch antlered bulls will be assured.

## Closing

In closing I would like to add, that I believe choosing a specific area to bow hunt will encourage the hunter to do more scouting, engage in securing a place to hunt, whether it is block management or a personal arrangement with a land owner. Nearly 1/3 of Montana is federal land. There are great opportunities for hunters if they scout and explore all the possibilities in the area of their choice.

This bill does not affect rifle hunting at all.

I believe this bill best addresses the wants and needs of Montana hunters, property owners, outfitters, towns and communities. I sincerely ask for a

Do Pass.